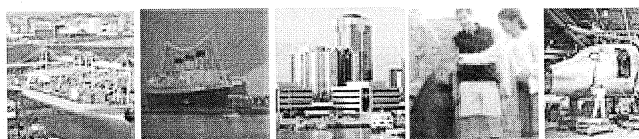


# Long Beach

## BUSINESS JOURNAL

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## Infrastructure And Transportation Projects Set To Get Stimulus Funds

By **Angela C. Allen** Senior Writer In less than two weeks, City of Long Beach officials expect to know just how much of the \$787 billion federal economic stimulus bill will flow into city coffers, says the city's top government liaison.

Federal grant guidelines should be released in "about a week or two," says Tom Modica, the city's government affairs manager, who recently returned from a trip to Washington, D.C., where he met with congressional members.

"We're well positioned; we've been working on stimulus issues for several months now, so we're in a good position to compete for money – we're optimistic," he says, noting that competition is expected to be very intense as municipalities around the country vie for a share of the stimulus funds.

"Right now we're kind of in that middle stage where we're identifying all the pots where we think we're going to be competitive in," he adds. "I don't have the actual dollar amounts for

**City Readies Wish List**

While some of the money from the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009 will be directly allocated to cities, large be distributed in federal grants to states, through which cities must then apply for the funds. Other funds will be released by funding formulas.

Last year the city submitted a \$497 million-plus wish list to the U.S. Conference of Mayors that outlined several projects that quickly up and running with the aid of federal funding. With passage of the stimulus bill last month, some of those projects are expected to move forward, but others may not qualify under federal funding guidelines.

Included on the list of potential projects was \$30 million for citywide street resurfacing and rehabilitation, \$111 million for street replacement, \$50 million for water-conservation projects and \$8 million for catch basins to handle storm-water runoff. Badly infrastructure and transportation projects will likely be first in line for funding, Modica says.

"We have approximately \$70 million worth of need that can go straight away," he says. "We're going to be applying for as [for] \$70 million as we can get, and the amount will probably be lower than that, but that's an area where we have a large need to go to be looking for funds for. We've been working on the congressional level – and on now the regional level – to increase allocation for local streets and roads as much as possible."

Securing money for the proposed catch-basins project is also a priority, says Modica: "[There is] definitely a priority for us to get funding for storm-water improvements, specifically catch-basin inserts, to try to block some of the trash from going out in the River or to our beaches." Modica says the city will focus on projects to spur private-sector job creation, such as building a new space parking structure at Long Beach Airport.

"Estimating jobs can be a difficult exercise, but we're trying to estimate those for our projects and focus on those projects that most jobs," he says. "Those are almost exclusively going to be private sector jobs, not creation of additional public sector jobs. The city also plans to go after some of the approximately \$4 billion clean-water revolving loan fund and a \$2 billion revolving fund for drinking water.

"This isn't a fund that California has accessed much in the past, because it's disadvantageous for large cities in California," he says. "But we're hoping this year to try to get more money out of the stimulus [for that fund] than we ever have before."

**Port To Apply For Funds** At the Port of Long Beach, officials are also waiting for federal guidelines to be released before applying for stimulus funds. Port spokesman Art Wong says while the port has \$2 billion worth of port improvements and upgrades in the pipeline that will be financed by port profits, federal funding would allow officials to expand that list and speed up completion on projects. Wong says the port will apply for funding for the \$1 billion Gerald Desmond Bridge replacement project, a planned \$55 million project, additional security projects, the \$2 billion clean-truck replacement program and help for the plug-in shoreside power

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"We're already planning nearly \$2 billion worth of projects that we hope to go forward with – terminal improvements and the says. "So we would like to augment some of that with these other things and have the federal government help assist us so move more quickly."

#### **Business Owners Skeptical Of Stimulus**

Although the stimulus funds haven't been released yet, many in the public are skeptical that the huge cash infusion will be a jump-start spending and lift the country out of the current economic recession.

A February Zogby poll of likely voters found that more than half – 56 percent – are doubtful the stimulus package will help them, and another 17 percent are unsure. The highest levels of optimism for the stimulus bill were found in adults 18 to 24, 38 percent more likely than older adults to believe it would benefit them. Just 16 percent of those 65 or older felt the same.

An e-mail survey by Los Altos-based MerchantCircle, the largest social network of local business owners in the nation, found that 73 percent of business owners say they have seen a "moderate to severe" decline in sales and revenue from the same year. And only 3 percent of business owners believe the stimulus bill does enough for small-business owners, while 65 percent does not, and 31 percent say they didn't know enough about the plan to have an opinion.



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